

**TOWN OF BOONE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 26, 2021
3:00 PM**

Historic Preservation Commission Members in Attendance: Chairperson Eric Plaag, Vice-Chairperson Phoebe Pollitt, Bettie Bond and Chuck Watkins

Council Liaisons: Rennie Brantz and Loretta Clawson

Town Staff in Attendance: Christy Turner-Senior Planner and Marlene Crosby-Board Secretary

Others Present: Mark Freed, Director of Cultural Resources

Call to Order

Chairperson Eric Plaag called the meeting of the Boone Historic Preservation Commission, held via WebEx, a video conferencing software to order on Tuesday, January 26, 2021 at 3:05 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

Council Liaison Brantz made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins to approve the agenda as amended by adding the following two items by Chairperson Plaag. The two items were an announcement by Council Liaison Loretta Clawson after the Adoption of the Agenda and an update on the District Designation Report after Public Comment.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chairperson Plaag opened the floor for Council Liaison Loretta Clawson to announce that she has resigned from the Boone Town Council and her position as Mayor-Pro Tem, as well as her position of Council Liaison to the Boone Historic Preservation Commission due to family health reasons. Chairperson Plaag and Council Liaison Brantz thanked Council Liaison Clawson for her service to the Town of Boone. Chairperson Plaag encouraged Council Liaison Clawson to consider in the future, applying to be a regular member of the Historic Preservation Commission, if it becomes possible for her to do so. Council Liaison Clawson noted that she enjoyed serving the Town of Boone and she would consider applying for a position on the HPC in the future, if it becomes possible for her to do so.

Approval of Minutes

Member Bond made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Pollitt to approve the September 30, 2020 joint meeting minutes as amended.

Vote:

Aye - All

Nay - None

The motion passed.

Member Watkins made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Pollitt to approve the October 27, 2020 joint meeting minutes as amended.

Vote:

Aye - All

Nay - None

The motion passed.

Member Watkins made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Pollitt to approve the November 10, 2020 regular meeting minutes as amended.

Vote:

Aye - All

Nay - None

The motion passed.

Member Bond made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Pollitt to approve the December 8, 2020 regular meeting minutes as amended.

Vote:

Aye – (Bond, Pollitt and Watkins)

Nay – None

Abstain – (Plaag)

The motion passed.

Election of Officers

Chairperson Plaag opened the floor for nominations for chairperson for 2021. Member Watkins nominated Chairperson Plaag to continue to serve as Chairperson for 2021. Chairperson Plaag accepted the nomination.

Member Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins to re-elect Chairperson Plaag for the position of the Historic Preservation Commission Chairperson for 2021.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chairperson Plaag opened the floor for nominations for Vice-Chairperson for 2021. Chairperson Plaag nominated Vice-Chairperson Pollitt to continue to serve as Chairperson for 2021. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt accepted the nomination.

Chairperson Plaag made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins to re-elect Vice-Chairperson Pollitt for the position of the Historic Preservation Commission Vice-Chairperson for 2021.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Public Comment

No individuals requested the opportunity to speak during public comment.

District Designation Report

Chairperson Plaag updated the Historic Preservation Commission on the status of the District Designation Report. He asked for an update on where we are in the process of reviewing the District Designation Report. He noted that there are some changes that need to be made to the report because of topics that have been previously discussed by the HPC.

Discussion ensued on submitting the revised District Designation Report to Council. Chairperson Plaag asked Ms. Christy Turner, Senior Planner if the Planning Staff would like for him to make the editorial changes and submit them to the Planning Staff for the said report to be sent to Council prior to Planning Retreat. Ms. Turner agreed to Chairperson Plaag emailing her the revised District Designation Report once he has made the changes. She said she would submit the report to Council. Chairperson Plaag asked if a motion and vote were necessary to submit the said report to Council. Ms. Turner said yes.

Discussion ensued on sending the revised District Designation Report to the Historic Preservation Commission for their review of it. Ms. Turner asked Chairperson Plaag when it would be convenient for him to send the said report to HPC. Chairperson Plaag reviewed the Town meeting calendar and noted that the next HPC meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2021 at 3 p.m. He also concluded he could prepare the said report by the next HPC meeting and the HPC could review it and vote on it. The report would be ready to be submitted to Council for their review at the February 12, 2021 Planning Retreat and the February regular Council meetings. Chairperson Plaag pointed out that it is important that the Council have the current iteration of said report available because he knows of at least one Council Member who feels some urgency about at least exploring the idea of the designation based on the “Secretary of the Interior Standards” as the design standards to start because of the concern for the continued destruction of properties within the proposed historic district.

Chairperson Plaag asked Ms. Turner about the status of the Town Attorney’s review of the District Designation Report. He pointed out that there is also a requirement that there be a 30

day review of the District Designation Report by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). He said if Council was so inclined, he suggested that the Council could make the designation of the district and let the public feedback phase be focused on the design standards.

Chairperson Plaag noted that he would email the revised District Designation Report to Ms. Turner by Thursday, February 4, 2021 and Ms. Turner will submit it to the Town Clerk on Friday, February 5, 2021 to be added to the agenda of the February 2021 Council meetings.

Chairperson Plaag asked Ms. Turner about Council's intentions as far as discussion on the District Designation Report at the Planning Retreat. Ms. Turner said that the Planning Staff will give a presentation to Council using the story journal and other examples within the district.

Chairperson Plaag asked if a representative of the HPC would need to attend the February 2021 Planning Retreat. Ms. Turner said that a HPC member would not be required to attend the said retreat.

Cemetery Deeds

Chairperson Plaag suggested tabling this agenda item until the next HPC meeting in February of 2021 because this topic is of lesser priority for discussion at this meeting.

Member Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins to table the Cemetery Deeds agenda item to the February 9, 2021 Historic Preservation Commission meeting.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Junaluska Marker

Chairperson Plaag asked Ms. Turner for an update on the manufacturing process of the Junaluska Marker. Ms. Turner said that the typesetting for the marker is being completed and it should be shipped to the Town of Boone in about two weeks.

Chairperson Plaag asked Ms. Turner about the approval of the June 19, 2021 date that was suggested by the Junaluska Heritage Association for the unveiling of the marker. Ms. Turner said that the suggested date was approved by Council for the unveiling of the marker.

Discussion ensued on the closing of the roads for the Junaluska Marker Ceremony. Ms. Turner noted that the HPC does need to discuss the road closures. Chairperson Plaag asked if a recommendation from the HPC is necessary for the request for road closures. Ms. Turner said a recommendation might be more effective, but it is not required. She said that she can just send in an application for the request for road closures. Chairperson Plaag confirmed with the HPC that in the HPC's previous discussions of the road closures for the unveiling of the marker that

there was consensus on the road closures. Member Bond agreed with Chairperson Plaag on said discussions.

Discussion ensued on the length of time for the unveiling ceremony. Chairperson Plaag recommended to allow for about ninety minutes of time for the ceremony from 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. Council Liaison Brantz agreed with recommending this length of time for the ceremony.

Discussion ensued on providing audio video equipment and live streaming for the unveiling ceremony. Mr. Mark Freed, Director of Cultural Resources said that he can provide a portable loud speaker, podium and microphone. He said that he can provide live streaming through the Jones House Cultural Resources Facebook or Instagram page. He noted that he can check with Ms. Lane Moody, Downtown Boone Development Coordinator to see if she can live stream the event on the Downtown Boone Development Association Facebook page. Mr. Freed suggested using a cell phone to video the event and then the video could be placed on the Town website for future viewing. Chairperson Plaag noted that he preferred for the ceremony to be live streamed on Facebook because Digital Watauga and the Watauga Historical Society would like to share that feed and they do not have an Instagram presence at this time.

Motion and Vote:

Chairperson Plaag made a motion, seconded by Member Bond to recommend to Council that there be a road closure for the unveiling of the Junaluska Marker ceremony on Saturday, June 19, 2021 at 5 p.m. with the road closures being from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the intersection of North Depot Street and Queen Street, from the Watauga County Library driveway west to the driveway of the funeral home on Queen Street; North Depot Street from North Street to King Street; and east bound traffic on Queen Street from the gap in the median near the Queen Street parking lot to North Depot Street. It was also recommended to Council that the Historic Preservation Commission request the assistance of Mr. Mark Freed, Cultural Resources Director and Ms. Lane Moody, Downtown Boone Development Association to help with equipment and live streaming of the ceremony.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chairperson Plaag pointed out that all of these recommendations are contingent on the approval of Watauga County allowing the Junaluska Marker to be placed on their property. Ms. Turner confirmed that Watauga County has approved the placement of the said historical marker on their property.

Turner House

Chairperson Plaag began explaining that as a private citizen of the Town of Boone that he had written a letter to the County Commissioners regarding the demolition of the Turner House. He

said that there was a lot of public feedback on the Digital Watauga posts that blamed the Town of Boone for the demolition of the Turner House. He said that he made it abundantly clear that the decision to tear down the Turner House was made by Mr. Deron Geouque, Watauga County Manager and the County Commissioners.

Member Watkins asked why the Town of Boone did not immediately cancel the demolition permit for the structure. Chairperson Plaag noted that it was his understanding that once the Town issues a permit, they do not have a mechanism to cancel it. Ms. Turner noted that a permit is good for six months after it is issued. She said if the Turner House had been a local landmark status or if the Town had been notified of a possible environmental issue, the Town may have been able to do something regarding the prevention of the demolition of the house.

Discussion ensued on the asbestos removal in the Turner House. Council Liaison Clawson asked Chairperson Plaag about a previous question she had regarding the asbestos in the Turner House. Chairperson Plaag said that he wrote a letter as a private citizen to Mr. Geouque Watauga County Manager on Thursday after the Turner House had been demolished regarding asbestos removal and certification for the property. He said that Mr. Geouque replied to him with what appeared to be appropriate documentation that Watauga County had done all that was required for the asbestos removal.

Chairperson Plaag explained that he does not think that there is much more the HPC can do as a body in terms of preservation for the Turner House property. He said he has been thinking about adding the Hardin/Turner House to the HPC's list of historical markers to be discussed by the HPC. He asked the HPC if they thought this proposed historical marker should be discussed for the Turner House and if the historical marker should include the words about the County's decision to demolish the house for a parking deck. Council Liaison Brantz said he would hesitate to do so and explained that he felt it might more inflame the situation. Member Bond said that she was not sure what would it would achieve by putting up a historical marker. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt asked that the HPC be given a month to ponder the idea.

Discussion ensued on the Watauga County Courthouse roof elevation. Chairperson Plaag said there was a case that just went before the Board of Adjustment where Watauga County asked to put an elevated, presumed gabled roof on the Court House building. Chair Plaag indicated that a Board member attempted to question the applicant about the courthouse project, but the board member learned that they had to recuse themselves. Chair Plaag said it was reported to him that the Board of Adjustment did not have any meaningful questions regarding the case and they granted all of the variances requested to add an architecturally inappropriate feature to the roof on top of the court house. He said he is concerned with the height from the elevated roof. He noted that the courthouse building is already out of scale to the rest of the district. Ms. Turner added that the minimum height in the B-1 zoning district for this area of King Street is 33 feet and the courthouse roof will go up to 50 feet and eight inches. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt asked if another floor is being added to the courthouse. Ms. Turner said the height is being increased to hide the HVAC equipment.

Mr. Freed left the meeting at approximately 4:36 p.m.

Town Streets

Chairperson Plaag asked for an update from the HPC on how they were progressing with their respective assignments on researching the history of Town Streets. Chairperson Plaag answered questions on the street assignment from Council and suggested newspaper searches could be done on the digitalized Watauga Democrat website to help with their research.

Chairperson Plaag suggested that the HPC email him the information they have gathered from their research on the Town streets and he will compile the data into a single document and present it to the HPC at the March 2021 meeting for their review.

Chairperson Plaag informed the HPC about a way to research information on the Town Streets at the Watauga County Register of Deeds website. He noted that an original subdivision plat is available for Grand Boulevard and a plat is available for Howard Street.

Certificate of Appropriateness Applications

Chairperson Plaag asked that the HPC to review the possible COA applications (permanently on file) and be prepared to discuss them at the next meeting. He also noted that the HPC may be facing their first COA case regarding the Linney House and potentially the Linney Law Office as a separate case.

Town Website

Chairperson Plaag gave a brief tour of the website that he has created with the Historic Preservation Commission information for the Town of Boone based on conversations with Ms. Jane Shook, Director of Planning and Inspections. He asked the HPC to take notes on the things that they like or do not like about the website.

Chairperson Plaag said that he has suggested to Ms. Shook that this proposed HPC website be located in a space which is linked to the Town's website. He began describing "Spacespace" which is an out of the box templated web design service. He noted the advantages of a "Spacespace" website. He said the Planning Staff can easily make changes to it without going through another party. In addition, he said that "Spacespace" as a website can be independent of the Town website and yet be integrated into the Town website via links.

Chairperson Plaag explained that Ms. Shook is exploring redesigning the Planning and Inspections Department webpage to add links for the Historic Preservation Commission and Community Appearance Commission's websites which are boards that report to the Planning and Inspections Department.

Chairperson Plaag pointed out topics or sub-pages he has built into the website which include historical landmarks, districts and historical markers. He said the design standards and Certificate of Appropriateness information sections are not built out at this time because they

are a work in progress. He said there is another sub-page for other projects where he added the Town Streets project which will include a photo of each street and a description of the street. He said the webpage also includes a brief description of the mission of the HPC and what the HPC does as determined by the Town of Boone Unified Development Ordinance. He said at the bottom of the landing page is the contact information for HPC and Ms. Marlene Crosby, the board secretary of the HPC is listed as the contact for the HPC.

Chairperson Plaag pointed out that the files on each sub-page are in PDF file format. He noted that there is a webpage for the public to submit their own historical marker topic suggestion. He added that this webpage gives the public an opportunity to let the HPC know which historical marker they would like for the HPC to explore. He said that the HPC had previously discussed that they would like to hear public feedback through the Town website on about historic preservation topics for the Town.

Chairperson Plaag opened the floor for questions and comments on the proposed HPC website. Council Liaison Brantz asked Chairperson Plaag how long should the description be for each street. Chairperson Plaag responded by saying that for the web interaction portion he recommended the length of the description to be from one to two paragraphs depending on the topic of the page. Chairperson Plaag explained the goal of the HPC is to make the website pleasant to interact with it.

Member Watkins suggested having another sub-page that has information on what the Town has lost and what has been replaced in the Town for example a before and after section covering the last six months. Chairperson Plaag said a "Lost Boone" sub-page would be an interesting topic for the HPC to take on. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt and Member Bond agreed. Chairperson Plaag said his purpose in this web design was to address the immediate informational needs of the HPC which include the COA and design standard information that the public needs to be able to access.

Chairperson Plaag talked about including a blog page on the website for whenever it would be needed for a certain event. He explained that if the HPC had a blog right now, it would probably be appropriate for the HPC to say what the Turner House was and why it was significant and what happened to it. He further explained that a new blog entry is usually written for each new topic with entries posted in reverse chronological order.

Chairperson Plaag asked about the next step on the proposed website and said he would meet with Ms. Turner and Ms. Shook on it. Ms. Turner said after she and Ms. Shook have reviewed the proposed website, they will set up a meeting with Chairperson Plaag to discuss it. After that meeting, Chairperson Plaag will report back to the HPC on the outcome of that discussion at hopefully the March 2021 HPC meeting.

Informal Discussion or Other Matters

Chairperson Plaag explained that he is having to pay a monthly fee for the Squarespace website. He said that he would rather not continue to pay for it after a few months. Member

Bond asked if there was any money left in the HPC budget. Chairperson Plaag said if the Town is serious about the proposed website, he would like to see the Town pay the monthly fee while the HPC and Staff work out the details of it. He said that he does not mind paying for the monthly fee up through the month of March of 2021.

Discussion ensued on recommending that the cost of the proposed website be taken out of the HPC's Town budget. Ms. Turner asked about the cost of the monthly fee. Chairperson Plaag said the yearly fee for the proposed website is under \$200.00. He said the cost of the web domain for a landing spot for the proposed website is under \$100.00. He said currently all together the approximate cost to have the proposed website is approximately \$300.00 a year to maintain it. He said that the HPC should have money allocated to them that is enough to cover the website expense. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt noted that there could be an issue if other boards might want their own website. Council Liaison Clawson noted that sometime in the future the Town might have a webmaster to maintain the Town website as well as HPCs

Discussion ensued on the budget hearings for 2021. Council Liaison Brantz said the date for the budget hearing is on February 22, 2021.

Chairperson Plaag made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Pollitt to recommend to Council to approve an expenditure of approximately \$500.00 per year to maintain a stand-alone Historic Preservation Commission website that is integrated by links through the Town of Boone website. This expenditure would cover the cost of the web design platform preferably through "Squarespace" as well as the cost of the domain and the security element that would go with it.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Member Bond talked about reimbursing Chairperson Plaag for the money he has already spent so far on the proposed website. Chairperson Plaag said that he is not concerned with being reimbursed for money he has spent so far on it. He is considering the money he has spent as a donation to the Town.

Chairperson Plaag suggested the following items for the next meeting agenda: Cemetery Deeds, COA applications and the revised District Designation Report.

Adjournment

With no other topics to be discussed, Member Bond made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Plaag to adjourn the meeting at 5:10 p.m.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None
The motion passed.

Eric Plaa, Chairperson

Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary